Many occasions and especially literature. He appreciated his social life and delivered on younger colleagues. Sven also had a deep interest in, and talent for, art of problems, always with a positive attitude, especially encouraging professional competence by many colleagues and friends. He was a brilliant gift. He was an unusually gifted man, appreciated for his warmth and pro-

Sven Hansbo was a monumental figure in Swedish geotechnical engineer-

Professor Sven Hansbo, 1924–2018

It is with great sadness that we have to inform readers that Professor Sven
Hansbo, Stockholm, Sweden, died peacefully on 8 January 2018, shortly
after having celebrated his 93rd birthday.

Sven Hansbo was a monumental figure in Swedish geotechnical engineer-
ing. He was an unusually gifted man, appreciated for his warmth and pro-
fessional competence by many colleagues and friends. He was a brilliant
researcher and scientist, innovative and bold in his approach to the solution
of problems, always with a positive attitude, especially encouraging
younger colleagues. Sven also had a deep interest in, and talent for, art
and especially literature. He appreciated his social life and delivered on
many occasions – by heart – famous Swedish poetry.

Sven Hansbo was born in the small village of Nyed in Värmland, was
brought up under simple circumstances in a family of peasants and
became the first in his family to take a college degree. After graduation
from Chalmers University of Technology (CTH), Sven wanted to pursue a
scientific career in mathematics, which became one of his major interests
in life. However, by coincidence, he was offered a research position at the
newly formed Swedish Geotechnical Institute where he conducted his
ground-breaking research on vertical drains, for which he was awarded a
honorary prize. In recognition of his work on prefabricated drains, lime
cement columns, dynamic compact and, in particular, his invention of ‘creep piles’ well
before others realised the potential of load sharing between foundations and floating piles.

In spite of his scientific background, Sven Hansbo remained a genuine
engineer with the ambition to challenge established technical solutions,
always striving for better and more cost-effective alternatives. Within his
area of expertise, ground treatment and piled foundations, he became
recognised as a world leader and became part of an international network
of leading experts, with whom he generously shared his ideas.

Of particular interest to Sven was the development of international and
European standards, especially in the area of ground improvement (vertical
drainage, deep mixing and soil nailing). But in his opinion, standards were
not to be a restraint of innovative thinking, recognising the risk of limiting
new ideas or innovative solutions.

Besides geotechnical engineering, Sven Hansbo was deeply engaged in
developing the engineering profession and the construction industry in
general. He was chairman of the Swedish Geotechnical Society (SGF) for
8 years and vice chairman of the Swedish Construction Association for
5 years. He was also chairman of the organising committee of the highly
successful 19th International Conference on Soil Mechanics and
Foundation Engineering, held in Stockholm in 1981. In recognition of his
many contributions to geotechnical engineering, Sven Hansbo was made
honorary member of SGF and awarded the SGF honorary prize. In connec-
tion with Sven’s 90th birthday, SGF established the ‘Sven Hansbo’ prize
acknowledging his outstanding contributions to Swedish geotechnical
engineering. In 1973, Sven Hansbo was also awarded an honorary prize
for the innovative application of load compensation in connection with
floating pile foundations by the Stockholm Construction Association.

Professor Hansbo received several international awards, such as the Golden
Award of Merits of the Academic Senate of the Warsaw Agricultural
University 1986, the Polytechnica Gdanska Medal for promoting the
scientific cooperation between Chalmers University of Technology and
Polytechnica Gdanska 1995, and the prestigious Kevin Nash Gold Medal
from the International Society of Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical
Engineering 2009.

While being a widely recognised and respected authority in his field by
colleagues and clients from all over the world, he was at the same time
unpretentious and could speak in the language of the everyday man:
‘talking to farmers in farmers’ way’, a clear link to his upbringing on a
farm under humble circumstances. At festive occasions, for example
at the Swedish Foundation Day or the memorable celebration of his
90th birthday, he recited by heart many verses of the famous Swedish poet Fröding.

Many of his former students, colleagues, members of SGF and long-standing friends in Sweden and abroad feel the great loss of an extraordinarily gifted yet humble man, always friendly, positive and with a twinkle in his eyes. The passing of Professor Sven Hansbo leaves a large void in the geotechnical community in Sweden and abroad.

Gunilla Fränzén, K. Rainer Massarsch and Göran Sällfors